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COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS AND SUBREGIONAL GROUPINGS ACTIVE IN THE ECE REGION

Note by the Executive Secretary

OVERVIEW

1. This document reviews the relationships between ECE, the United Nations System and the other international organizations, financial institutions and subregional groupings active in Europe. The annex contains a brief description of the mandates and goals of the subregional groupings. This document does not address relations with the European Union and the OSCE. Cooperation with the European Union, which enjoys a special status within ECE, is particularly well developed in statistics, transport, environment, trade facilitation, and industry. Details of special cooperation with PHARE and TACIS programmes is given in document E/ECE/1328. Cooperation with the OSCE, which has a similar membership to ECE, is presented in a separate report, E/ECE/1333.

2. Institutions, organizations and subregional groupings are numerous in Europe. For cooperation with them to be fruitful, it must focus on issues of mutual benefit and be concluded with the aim of making the best use of the available resources, by avoiding overlaps and taking advantage of complementarities. With well established institutions, with a strong secretariat, working relations have been established which encourage the exchange of information, data and analyses. Even if mandates cover similar areas, duplication is rare thanks to efforts made in previous years. In some cases an explicit decision on areas of competence avoids duplication, for instance in the field of the environment, ECE focuses on pollution while the Council of Europe focuses on the protection of wildlife. More generally, the

regular meetings of Ministers of the Environment, as part of the "Environment for Europe" process in which ECE plays a coordinating role, allocate responsibility to the various institutions active in Europe on common programmes. In other areas, such as statistics, the programme of work of ECE, Eurostat and OECD is examined jointly by the Conference of European Statisticians each year; in other cases there is a difference of approach. For example, whilst OECD produces in-depth studies of some individual countries in transition, ECE produces a comparative review of situations and policies for the whole region. Dialogue between secretariats has reduced the risk of overlaps. Similarly, stronger coordination within each member State would prevent similar requests being addressed to different institutions.

3. As for subregional groupings, cooperation could be mutually beneficial. However, if cooperation is to produce tangible results, several points should be considered:

- Often, newly formed organizations do not have a sufficiently experienced secretariat or resources commensurate with their mandates, but they have a high political profile. ECE has developed policy instruments, conventions, norms, standards and guidelines which could be adapted to specific subregional contexts by these organizations, contributing to better information on and better implementation of these instruments. This would bring the benefit of greater efficiency to the sub-regional groupings, and would ensure a significant role in concrete regional projects for ECE.

- Experience has shown that most subregional groupings, although important as policy making bodies which can ease tensions between their members, have produced only limited concrete economic results, due to financial and other constraints. In particular, there is a tendency for new initiatives to seek and welcome whatever assistance is offered without having previously formulated a clear plan of action, identifying those elements which are actually needed.

- Sometimes difficulties are due to internal structures within States. Since the decision making bodies of most subregional groupings are centred around the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, coordination with other Ministries can be difficult. Within the Ministries of Foreign Affairs themselves, those desks that deal with subregional groups often have little experience of the United Nations system. This can lead to duplication of efforts, or opportunities not being taken advantage of. In addition, information about the potential of the United Nations system is not well disseminated in these member States.

- The ECE should cooperate on issues where it has a comparative advantage and expertise. In doing so, it would benefit from UNDP, PHARE and TACIS support. United Nations Operational Activities, spearheaded by UNDP, could actively support this cooperation in the context of regional coordination as stipulated in the Triennial Policy Review of its United Nations Operational Activities.

I. THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ACTIVE IN THE REGION

(i) United Nations System

4. The biennial Administrative Coordination Committee (ACC) chaired by the Secretary General, is complemented by meetings of the regional heads of the UN agencies, convened by the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions, the second of which for the ECE region took place on 6 February 1995. This was attended by FAO, ILO, IMF, ITU, UNEP, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNFPA, WHO, WIPO, WMO, World Bank, EBRD, European Commission, Council of Europe and ECE. The meeting took up three basic issues: the integration of the transition countries into the European and global economy; social development issues of importance to the countries in transition of the region; and environment and sustainable development in the transition economies. It was decided that future action would concentrate on information exchange and cooperation focusing on regional follow-up to global conferences. Future discussion of experiences will concentrate on "generic activities", such as training and technical cooperation activities undertaken at the country, subregional or regional levels. It was also agreed that other intergovernmental organizations active in the countries in transition but which do not belong to the UN system (EBRD, OECD, the European Commission and the Council of Europe) would be invited to attend all future regional ACC meetings.

5. Whenever appropriate, ECE develops cooperation with the bodies and agencies of the UN system by participating in meetings, preparing joint programmes, providing inputs for the Secretary General's reports and other reports prepared for ECOSOC and the General Assembly. ECE also participates actively in the subsidiary bodies established by ACC, such as the CCPOQ meetings and in preparations for, and the follow-up to global conferences (see E/ECE/1343). In 1995, contributions to the Fourth World Conference on Women, preparations for HABITAT II and preparations for UNCED were of particular importance.

(ii) World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. ECE member States account for 31 of the total WTO membership of 111. However, the 12 transition economies with observer status and the 6 members of the WTO with transition economies (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) are treated as developed countries, with no special attention given to the particular difficulties they face.

7. A series of meetings was held between the WTO and the ECE Trade Division during 1995. The following issues were identified as deserving special attention with regard to technical cooperation: the role of ECE in supporting the multilateral trading system of WTO; standardization; UN/EDIFACT; compliance with the trade policy review mechanism (TPRM); market access; technical barriers to trade and the status of ECE commercial quality standards for agricultural produce; trade in services/codes for classification of services; timber and forest sector issues including trade in forest products; trade-related investment measures (TRIPs); ECE regional advisory programme; training; and the accession of transition economies to WTO. ECE is an observer

at the WTO Trade and Development Committee, and has attended the sessions related to transition economies.

8. The WTO welcomed the role of ECE in setting quality standards. It was agreed that ECE would remain the principal institution in the field of standardization. The relationship between ISO and ECE was acknowledged as important. The meetings reaffirmed that solid links should be maintained between the two organizations, through regular consultations, to avoid duplication of effort.

9. It has been proposed that the WTO Trade and Development Committee should mandate greater participation and information exchange between ECE and the WTO, with plans for regular technical cooperation meetings and participation at WTO committees and working parties.

(iii) World Bank (IBRD)

10. Contacts were intensified to secure a greater interaction in both policy and operational activities. Consultations focused mostly on cooperation related to investments databases and training. In addition, contacts were established on the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina on mid-term sectoral priorities.

11. The Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) is a cooperative venture between the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and OECD. The Commission of the European Communities also played an important role in the start-up and early development of JVI which is specialized in providing training related to the management of transition processes. Proposals for cooperation in joint training and investment promotion between JVI and ECE have been agreed.

(iv) The International Monetary Fund (IMF)

12. ECE cooperation with IMF falls into three main categories: statistics programme planning in ECE region; sharing of data; and technical assistance to countries in transition.

13. The IMF Directorate of Statistics actively participates in the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) as well as a number of other UN system statistical committees. IMF statistical work is included in the joint presentation of statistical programmes of all international agencies and is discussed by the CES.

14. The IMF provides a significant input to ECE work on the countries in transition, particularly with regard to financial data. ECE actively participates in the steering committee chaired by the IMF which coordinates technical assistance in statistics to the CIS countries. The IMF provides secretariat services and ECE provides regional advisors. ECE is the executing agency for a number of projects on demographics and social statistics, in addition to the regular programme of work.

(v) European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

15. There has been continued cooperation with the EBRD. In particular, the collaboration between the EBRD and the Trade and Investment Promotion Section (under sub-programme 7) has four main components: Firstly, EBRD participated in the Investment Forum organized by ECE in November 1995 and a Group of Experts on Project Finance Technology was created. The Legal branch of EBRD will participate on a continuous basis in this initiative. Secondly, ECE has been the United Nations representation at the annual sessions of the EBRD. Thirdly, the Investment Database on Private Foreign Direct Investment into the countries in transition, which is an ongoing ECE project, is frequently consulted by the EBRD as part of an ongoing dialogue. Finally, the Committee on the Development of Trade, at its meeting in December 1995, considered an ECE study on trade and investment finance. The EBRD had helped significantly in providing information for this study, as with a number of other studies carried out in the field of industry and technology.

16. Apart from the contact developed with the EBRD through the Trade and Investment Promotion projects, there was no direct financial support to the UN by the EBRD. However, regular information exchange at the level of the secretariats of the two organizations as well as information provided to governments through ECE's advisory services have been of mutual benefit.

(vi) The Council of Europe

17. The cooperation between the Council of Europe and ECE has been strengthened during the 1990s, particularly with regard to the preparations for United Nations global conferences. The ECE regional preparatory meeting for the Intergovernmental conference on population and development held in Geneva in 1993 was co-sponsored by the Council of Europe, which provided both substantive and financial contributions. It also contributed documentation for the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Vienna, 1994). Similar cooperation is expected for the regional preparations for the Habitat II conference. Invitations are regularly exchanged and participation secured in ECE and Council of Europe meetings of mutual interest, such as population, migration, women, environment and human settlements. The Council of Europe regularly takes part in the regional consultative meetings requested by ECE to secure greater interaction among organizations active in the region.

18. The growing overlap of membership and complementary mandates of both institutions imposed the need for closer cooperation between the two institutions. The Parliamentary Assembly had its first debate in 1995 on UN/ECE activities. The resolution adopted noted with satisfaction the complementary efforts of the Council of Europe and ECE. It invited interested ECE member States to strengthen its on-going activities of relevance to countries in transition and called on the Governments of Council of Europe and the European Union to support financially the ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition. The Parliamentary conference on economic Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe will be hosted by the Polish 'Sejm' on 22-24 May 1996. This innovative meeting will gather parliamentarians and government officials and will be organized in cooperation with ECE. The ECE contribution

will draw on the Bulletin, the Survey and the background document prepared for the OSCE meeting on the implementation of the commitments obtained in the Document of the Bonn Conference in Economic Cooperation in Europe. The Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe held the first session of its newly established Regional Economic Forum of Europe in Geneva in January 1996. The meeting focused on East-West economic cooperation between regions. At the invitation of the Council of Europe, ECE cooperated with the Geneva Authorities in organizing this meeting. This initiative proved successful and regular meetings on more focused issues will be organized. For ECE it is worth cooperating with the Chamber of Regions as regions are delegated increasing economic responsibilities and are more and more involved in transboundary relationships. They can play an important role in and can benefit from the implementation of many of the arrangements developed by ECE, such as the conventions on air pollution and on industrial accidents and the interconnection of networks.

(vii) Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

19. ooperation between OECD and ECE is very close in the field of statistics, where three organizations, the EU, the OECD and ECE through Eurostat jointly present their annual programmes to the Conference on European Statisticians. For the first time, this annual meeting took place at the invitation of the OECD in Paris in 1994. This cooperation includes regular consultation with OECD and the EU at the level of Working Groups, Technical Cooperation inputs and financial support to joint ventures. Regular consultative meetings are convened between OECD, FAO and ECE in the field of agriculture and timber to secure a coordinated approach to programmes. The forthcoming meeting will be held at the OECD headquarters in Paris 1996. OECD representatives take an active part in ECE energy meetings and in the Inland Transport Committee activities through the CEMT.

II. SUBREGIONAL GROUPINGS

(i) Black Sea Economic Cooperation

20. ECE participates regularly in BSEC ministerial meetings. Sixteen working groups established by BSEC provide ample opportunity for exchange of information. The support literature, advisory services and inputs for the technical meetings may be provided by ECE on request. Thus, ECE provided support to the first meeting of the working group on energy by preparing a separate publication on the energy situation in BSEC countries "BSEC in Energy: Momentums and Opportunities", based on its experience. The meeting of the group (Vienna, October 1994) considered a number of project proposals on the basis of which ECE has identified possible cooperation. The BSEC transport network project of a road and rail ring around the Black Sea could benefit from ECE work on trans-European railways and motorways. ECE has prepared inputs for the BSEC working group on transport (Anapa, Russian Federation, October 1995) and for the ad-hoc group of experts on transport networks (Kyiv, Ukraine, October 1995). Due to the short term cash flow crisis, ECE participation at these meetings was not honoured. There was an OSCE meeting in Sofia in November 1995 on transport specific to the BSEC region to which ECE made a significant contribution.

(ii) The Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States

21. Two workshops took place in 1995 at which the CIS secretariat was represented by its Executive Secretary. In March 1995, at the ECE workshop on "Promoting the expansion of Trade of the Countries in Transition as an important factor in their integration with the European and global economy" a statement was made indicating the areas of particular interest to the CIS secretariat in cooperating with ECE. In June 1995, at the ECE consultative workshop on industrial restructuring, he reaffirmed his call for close cooperation between the CIS Executive Secretariat and ECE in the area of industrial development. ECE was called upon to assist the CIS in training experts to improve the quality of CIS project documents. The CIS Executive Secretary invited ECE to sign a cooperation agreement, so that relations between the two organizations would gain a legal basis and exist parallel to the relations between ECE and member States of the CIS. He also suggested that the two organizations could jointly work on such problems as Aral Sea conservation, ozone layer protection, liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and other emergency situations. It was further suggested that there was a need for a mechanism to coordinate the efforts of international organizations in these respective areas. The CIS called for the establishment of a consultative council of regional organizations.

22. The ECE, following a pragmatic approach, has developed cooperation with the CIS in areas where it has an effective impact. It has close relations with the CIS Statistical Committee. It has also established contacts with ICERC, the International Committee for Economic Reform and Cooperation in 1995 (established in 1993 in Kyiv with the support of the CIS States, to stimulate trade and investment among the countries of the region and to promote east-west economic cooperation and investment) in order to exchange information on issues of common interest and to encourage participation at meetings. On substantive issues such as energy or infrastructure there are better mechanisms at the working level, in particular the Economic Cooperation Committee for CIS Countries, based in Moscow, which is a relatively new and expanding organization aimed specifically at cooperation on economic issues. A project on "The Present Situation and Prospects for the Fuel and Energy Complex in the CIS" was initiated in 1995, with the participation of all CIS Governments through national experts on energy matters. The first meeting was held in Moscow from 13-15 September 1995, with further consultations planned for 1996.

(iii) The Central European Initiative

23. ECE has, to the extent possible, been represented at the high-level meetings of the CEI. It also took an active part in the CEI working groups on transport, environment and energy. The recent initiatives include the contribution of ECE to the fourth, fifth and sixth plenary meetings of the Working Group on small and medium sized enterprises to design a relevant programme. ECE also took an active part in the Ministerial meeting on international economic relations and foreign trade questions in Skopje, The FYR of Macedonia in March 1995 to which an ECE position paper was presented. Four associated States also attended the meeting as a step towards their more active involvement in CEI activities. The ministers of the CEI member States

reaffirmed that efforts aimed at furthering their countries' economic transformation and at removing barriers that prevented or delayed their integration into the EU were the main tasks of the initiative. They paid special attention to the need for increasing mutual trade among CEI member States through new initiatives aimed at promoting trade, such as specified fairs, direct investment etc. They agreed that the actions of the working group on SMEs were a critical contribution to the economic development of the whole region. The "Creation of SMEs with regard to regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe" workshop was held on 20/21 April 1995 in Vienna by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs. ECE is invited to most CEI meetings at the level of Working Groups of Experts, mainly because of the TEM/TER projects. The work of the CEI on transport infrastructure juxtaposes with the TEM/TER network, however the aim is not to initiate additional projects, rather to realize the TEM/TER networks in the Central European region. The CEI proposed to intensify cooperation with ECE on its priority project, the Central European Transport Information Reporting System (CETIR), which includes the elaboration of methodology for a proposed regional multi-modal planning study (TEN priority studies), the preparation of a series of planning studies on domestic transport (TP studies), modern information management systems (including software for GIS analysis) and the sharing and processing of data. There is potential for the methodologies developed by the CETIR project to be applied and further developed in the TEM/TER projects.

(iv) The Nordic Council of Ministers

24. Following the visit of its delegation to Geneva in 1993, the Nordic Council of Ministers supported politically ECE work related to preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women and Social Summit. ECE was given prominence at the Nordic Forum on Women (Turku, Finland, 1994). Similar support was provided to the International Council on Social Welfare which cooperated with ECE in organizing events at the NGO forum held during the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995. The Nordic Council participated in the inter-agency consultative meeting on regional follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in January 1996.

(v) Baltic Council of Ministers

25. The representation of the Baltic Council of Ministers attended the fiftieth session of the Commission in April 1995 to seek cooperation. Advisory services were provided on industrial development and the environment.

(vi) Council of Baltic Sea States

26. ECE has cooperated only indirectly, through the Baltic Council of Ministers. ECE has been invited to contribute to the meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Baltic Sea region (Stockholm, 25-25 March 1996).

(vii) European Free Trade Association

27. ECE is exploring the possibility of cooperating with EFTA, particularly in providing assistance to economies in transition. There is already an established EFTA technical cooperation programme with the Central and Eastern

European Countries (CEEC). Since 1990 EFTA has negotiated a range of free trade agreements with Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania and signed declarations as a basis for technical assistance with Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. The possibilities for EFTA/ECE cooperation were presented at the EFTA's 35th Anniversary workshop in Geneva in March 1995.

(viii) Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

28. So far ECE has no direct relations with ECO, but it would be of interest, in particular in transport and energy, to liaise with ESCAP in its cooperation with ECO. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the executive heads of ESCAP and ECO in Istanbul in July 1993, during the second summit meeting of ECO. Pursuant to this, there has been joint participation in workshops and seminars organized by ECO and ESCAP. In addition, ESCAP initiated Consultative Meetings among Executive Heads of subregional organizations, which now take place annually. The Secretary General of ASEAN hosted the meeting in Jakarta in January 1995, and the Secretary General of ECO will host the next meeting in Teheran in May 1996 which will consider developments in the four areas identified for promoting inter-subregional cooperation and cooperation with ESCAP: 1) Trade and Investment; 2) Transport and Communications; 3) Human Resources Development; and 4) Energy. ESCAP is currently involved in five studies to complement the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) projects as endorsed by the Commission at its forty-eighth session (1992), and is involved in promoting border-crossing facilitation measures and legal instruments which are consistent with those developed by ECE, in order to ensure complementarity where regional links to Europe are developed.

ANNEX

(i) The Baltic Council of Ministers (BCM)

History: Established on 12 May 1990 in Tallinn, Estonia, developing from the reconstituted Baltic Entente of 1989 and old Concord on Cooperation of 1934.

Mandate: To consolidate independence from the former Soviet Union; to promote economic prosperity and democracy in the region. Spheres of cooperation have been identified in the following areas: foreign affairs, defence and peacekeeping, finances and currency, justice and legislation, science and education, environmental protection, economic issues, energy, trade, construction, agriculture, forestry, transport and communications, social affairs, prevention and control of crime, culture, customs, information technology, and border security.

Members (3): Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Structure: The Baltic Council comprises the Chairman of the Supreme Councils, and the Prime and Foreign Ministers of Member States.

Recent Developments: The Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the Baltic States on 21 September 1993 and the Baltic Assembly resolution of 31 October 1993 and 15 May 1994 stressed the need to pursue cooperation between the respective parliaments and governments of the member States. On 13 June 1994 in Tallinn, the Agreement on Parliamentary and Governmental Cooperation between the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania was concluded. The agreement included the Terms of Reference of the Baltic Council of Ministers. In this way, a direct link with the executive power was secured. Intergovernmental cooperation within the Baltic Council of Ministers takes place at the Ministerial level and at the level of senior officials. 19 Committees of senior officials have been established. The work of the committees is supervised and coordinated by the Baltic Cooperation Committee.

Relations with Other Organizations: The Council is linked to the Nordic Council, the Baltic Assembly, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

(ii) The Baltic Assembly

History: Established in 1991, following the creation of the Baltic Council on 12 May 1990. The first session of the Baltic Assembly was held in Riga, Latvia in February 1992.

Mandate: To act as an institution for parliamentary cooperation in order to address issues such as foreign policy, defence and security.

Members (3): Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Structure: The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly comprises 60 delegates, 20 from each member State. The Assembly has standing committees on: Legal; Socio-economic; ecology and energy; communications; education; culture and science; and foreign affairs.

Recent Developments: Prior to and immediately after independence, the Baltic republics maintained a high degree of unity largely by avoiding clear definitions of their policy goals, especially in their foreign policy. Clearer definition of policy has led to greater awareness of conflicting aims. For example, initial hopes that the Baltic States, serving as a conduit to the Russian market for Western countries would attract substantial foreign investment, have been disappointing. Since each country sees that one nation's foreign investment gain is the others' loss, the competition for foreign investment has become increasingly bitter. EU and NATO membership is also proving to be more difficult to achieve than was originally anticipated. This has led the Baltic governments to explore the possibility of individual rather than group entry. However, the EU and Nordic Council States have made it clear that greater Baltic cooperation and unity is a necessary precondition for membership in the EU and NATO.

Relations with Other Organizations: The Presidium has a joint working group with the Presidium of the Nordic Council and has a link with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The delegations from the Baltic Assembly Presidium attend the Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Black Sea Area, the Inter-Parliamentary Consultative Council of Benelux, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

(iii) The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

History: Established on 6 May 1992 in Copenhagen, by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the ten countries in the Baltic Sea region. CBSS is also referred to as the Baltic Council.

Mandate: To intensify cooperation among member States; to serve as forum for discussion of issues of common concern to countries on the Baltic coastline. The Council's main concerns are: support for new democratic institutions; economic and technical cooperation; environmental protection; development of transport and communications; cultural exchange; education; and tourism. Currently there are working groups on: assistance to the new democratic institutions; nuclear and radiation safety; euro-faculty.

Members (10): Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden

Structure: The Council meets annually at the level of Foreign Ministers. The Presidency is held in rotation for one-year term by participating countries. The Committee of Senior Officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs is responsible for promotion and coordination of activities.

Recent Developments: Sweden currently holds the rotating presidency for 1996. The last CBSS meeting took place in Stockholm in December 1995. The Council has proposed new CSO working groups on: economic and technical cooperation; joint information network of the Baltic Sea.

Relations with Other Organizations: The CBSS cooperates with: the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Nordic Council.

(iv) The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

History: Established on 25 June 1993 in Istanbul by the governments of 11 countries. The BSEC is also referred to as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region or the Black Sea Group.

Mandate: To set up a regional structure of multilateral cooperation in various fields of economic activity in the Black Sea region. It aims to contribute to political stability; economic development; transition to market economies (especially in the case of former Warsaw Pact members); and cooperation in energy, transportation, tourism, communication, information and environmental protection, science and technology, trade and industrial cooperation, agricultural and agro-industry promotion, protection of investments and avoidance of double taxation. The Participating States are striving to provide support for SMEs, to encourage direct contacts among companies and firms, to facilitate the free movement of people, capital, goods and services and capital among members; and to ensure favourable conditions for overseas investments.

Members (11): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine. The BSEC Council has granted observer status to Israel, Egypt, Poland, Slovakia and Tunisia. Two European Union countries, Italy and Austria, have also been granted observer status.

Structure: The decision-making body of the BSEC is the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MMFA), which meets every six months. The chairmanship of the MMFA also rotates every six months. The Chairman is responsible for coordinating all activities carried out within the framework of the BSEC and for the proper application of Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the MMFA. The MMFA contains sixteen Working Groups and Groups of Experts covering trade and industrial cooperation; energy; transport; communications; banking and finance; environmental protection; tourism; agriculture and agro-industry; science and technology; avoidance of double taxation; promotion and protection of investments; exchange of statistical data and economic information. In addition to the MMFA, the BSEC consists of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (to be established in Thessaloniki, Greece), the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (established in February 1993. Greece and Bulgaria are not members), and the BSEC Council for Business. It has been decided that the International Centre for Black Sea Studies will be set up in Greece with the support of the EU. The permanent international secretariat of the BSEC was established in Istanbul in January 1994 and has an annual budget of approximately US$1 million.

Relations with Other Organizations: The BSEC has links with: the Central European Initiative (CEI), the European Union (EU), the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The BSEC has links with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

(v) The Nordic Council of Ministers

History: Established in 1952 by a Statute drawn up between the Governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Finland joined in 1955. Since 1970, the autonomous territories of the Faeroe and the Aaland Islands have their own representatives on the Council. Greenland has been represented since 1984.

Mandate: To instigate, monitor and accelerate the pace of cooperation among the Nordic countries and autonomous territories; and to act as the cooperative body of the legislature and governments of member countries in matters involving joint action and to promote discussion of common interests.

Members (8): Aaland Islands, Denmark, Faeroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden. Observers: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Structure: The Nordic Council of Ministers is composed of the Plenary Assembly; the Presidium; and six Standing Committees. The Plenary Assembly of the Council meets at least once a year. It consists of 87 members, elected by and from the Parliaments of the respective countries: Denmark 16; Faeroe Islands 2; Greenland 2; Finland 18; Aaland 2; Iceland 7; Norway 20; Sweden 20. (The Delegations from Faeroe Islands and Greenland form part of the Danish Delegation and Aaland is part of the Finnish Delegation.). The Presidium of the Council comprises 11 parliamentarians (at least 2 from each country). The Secretariat of the Presidium is in Stockholm. A Secretariat Coordinating Committee assists the Presidium. Each member of the Council (except members of the Presidium) is assigned to one of the six Standing Committees which comprises 13 members. The six Standing Committees are: Economic Committee; Legal Committee; Cultural Committee; Environmental Committee; Social committee; and Budget Committee. The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) forms an integrated whole with the Nordic Council. The Secretariat of NMR is located in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Relations with Other Organizations: The Nordic Council of Ministers has a cooperation agreement with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. They are in the process of setting up the Nordic Cultural Forum and the Nordic Institute for European Community Law. The Council of Ministers has a close link with the Baltic Council and has an agreement on parliamentary cooperation with the Baltic Assembly. The Presidium of the Nordic Council has a joint working group with the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly. The Council is expected to coordinate the activities of the proposed Baltic Sea Council, which may be set up as the parliamentary dimension of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Delegations from the Nordic Council attend the Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area. The Nordic Council supports the works of: the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Council also has links with: the Economic Free Trade Area (EFTA); the European Commission; the European Parliament; the Parliamentary Assembly of

the Commonwealth of Independent States; and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

(vi) The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

History: Established on 8 December 1991 at Visculi, Belarus by the Governments of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. The other countries of the former USSR - except Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania - joined the CIS on 21 December 1991. Georgia subsequently joined.

Mandate: To promote the economic and social progress of the member States; to develop and protect the diversity of cultures in the region; to promote international peace and security as well as to maintain peace among the different ethnic groups in the region.

Members (12): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine

Structure: The CIS comprises eight bodies: the Council of CIS Heads of States (meets twice a year); the Council of CIS Heads of Governments (meets four times a year); the Coordination and Consultative Committee (meets every two months); the Executive Secretariat; the Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States; the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; the Council of Ministers for Defence; and the Economic Court of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Recent Developments: Member States agreed to create an Economic Union and a Military Union of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 16 May 1994 in Moscow. Leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine signed a pact on 28 January 1995 setting up a United Trade Zone, or customs union, whose first stage began in the first and second quarters of 1995 and which is open to other CIS members. The CIS members set up an Interstate Bank on 22 January 1993.
Relations with Other Organizations: The CIS has links with: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the Council of Europe (CE); the European Union (EU); the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. The CIS has a cooperation agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

(vii) The Central European Initiative (CEI)

History: Established on 11 November 1989 by the Governments of Austria, Hungary, Italy and the former Yugoslavia. Subsequently Czechoslovakia joined. The current name was adopted in 1992, when Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina became full members of the initiative.

Mandate: To establish and strengthen mutually beneficial partnership structures based on the shared values of parliamentary democracy and human rights; to consolidate democratic institutions, economic recovery and

development; and to foster full integration of its member States into the European Union.

Members (10): Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and German States of Baden-Wurtenberg and Bavaria have shown continuous interest in cooperation with CEI. They have obtained associated status and are eligible to participate in CEI working groups and consultations at expert level.

Structure: The CEI prime ministers meet yearly, while foreign ministers hold meetings every six months. Parliamentary delegation meetings are also held. Each country has a national coordinator to secure the proper representation at the working level.

Recent Developments: Efforts are under way to establish the CEI permanent secretariat in Trieste. In October 1995, at the Prime Ministers meeting in Warsaw it was decided to expand membership in early 1996 to all interested non-member States belonging to the CEI - Albania, Baden-Wurtenberg, Bavaria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. The ministers of the CEI member States reaffirmed that efforts aimed at furthering their countries' economic transformation and at removing barriers that prevented or delayed their integration into the EU were the main tasks of the initiative. The ministers paid special attention to the need to increase mutual trade among CEI member States through new initiatives such as specified fairs, and direct investment.

Relations with other Organizations: Regular political consultations are held between the CEI, the European Union, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. The CEI maintains regular contacts with other regional groupings within the region such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Baltic Council of Ministers, the German federal regions, and the trade unions of its member states. It also has links with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe, and Group of Twenty Four (G-24).

(viii) The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)

History: Established on 27-29 January 1985 in Teheran by the Governments of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, as a successor organization to the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), which had been set up on 21 July 1964 in Ankara, and existed until 1979.

Mandate: To promote economic, technical and cultural cooperation among member States; to expand trade; to promote conditions for sustained economic growth, and to consolidate cultural and spiritual affinities.

Members (10): Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

Structure: The Council of Ministers (meets at least once a year) is the decision-making body, which consists of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The

Council of Deputies (meets regularly in Teheran) is responsible for formulating issues requiring decision by the member States, and for implementing decisions of the Council of Ministers. It consists of the Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran and the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of ECO member States in Iran. The Regional Planning Council (meets once a year in Teheran) reviews and evaluate the results of the past programmes, and proposes programmes to the Council of Ministers. It comprises the Heads of Planning Organizations of member States.

Recent Developments: ECO and ASEAN have conveyed a joint request to ESCAP to undertake a study on the possibilities for cooperation between the two organizations. This study should be completed in April 1996. The ECO has concluded a framework agreement with the European Union.

Relations with Other Organizations: The ECO has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). It also has links with: the Association of South Eastern Asian Nations (ASEAN); the European Commission; and the Organizations of the Islamic Conference.

(ix) The Caspian Cooperation Council

History: Originated from the Caspian Sea Cooperation Council created at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting in Teheran in February 1992. The final draft of the agreement on this new subregional organization was approved during the meetings between Iran, Russian Federation and the Caspian coastal States on 10-11 October 1995 in Moscow.

Mandate: To address and resolve issues related to the use of the Caspian Sea and its resources and to promote cooperation among the Caspian coastal States.

Members (5): Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakstan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan.

Relations with Other Organizations: None

Recent Developments: The Caspian Sea Cooperation Council is practically paralysed due to the continuing disputes among the members about control over oil, fishing rights and the legal regime of the Caspian Sea. The most controversial issue is over control of the pipelines through which the flow of Caspian oil from Azerbaijan (and later Kazakstan) will reach its markets. The Russia Federation wants the oil to be piped through its territory while some Western oil companies involved insist on the southern route via Georgia and Turkey.

(x) The Council of Europe (CE)

Origins: Established in London on 5 May 1949, with the signature of the Statute of the Council of Europe by government representatives from Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom. The statute states that every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and other fundamental

freedoms. Since 1989, the Council of Europe has been the pre-eminent European organization for intergovernmental and parliamentary cooperation, capable of welcoming the new democracies of Europe on an equal footing. Membership of the Council of Europe currently stands at 39.

Mandate: Its aims and objectives cover all aspects of European affairs apart from defence. Its main aims are: to protect human rights and pluralistic democracy; to promote awareness of a European cultural identity and to encourage its development; to seek solutions to problems facing European societies such as minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, environmental protection, bioethics, drugs; to provide human rights protection for Europe's post-communist democracies; and to assist central and east European countries with their political, legislative and constitutional reforms.

Members (39): Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom. Special guest status (introduced in June 1989 to forge closer links with the legislative assemblies of Central and Eastern European countries): Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia.

Structure: The Council of Europe is made up of two bodies: the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Committee of Ministers is the decision-making body, and consists of the Foreign Ministers of the member States or their deputies. It meets twice a year in Strasbourg. Minister's Deputies meet monthly. The Committee of Ministers decides on recommendations submitted to it by the Parliamentary Assembly. The Parliamentary Assembly has 263 members elected or appointed by the national parliaments as well as delegations from parliaments of the States which have special guest status. The Assembly meets four times a year, while its 50 or so committees and sub-committees meet at regular interval throughout the year. The Secretariat of the Council of Europe, headed by a Secretary-General (5 year term), serves the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Recent Developments: Belarus and Croatia have officially applied for membership. The Committee of Ministers agreed in January 1994 to the establishment of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, which consists of two chambers (one representing local authorities, the other regional authorities). Its aim is to enhance and develop the role of local and regional authorities within the institutional structure of the Council of Europe.

Relations with Other Organizations: The Council of Europe has established privileged links with the European Community with the intention of promoting closer cooperation between the two institutions. The Council of Europe Office for Liaison with the European Communities was established in 1975. The Council of Europe has agreements with the following organizations: the International

Organization for Migration (IOM); the European Free Trade Association (EFTA); the European Commission; the League of Arab States; the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the Organization of American States (OAS); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the Nordic Council, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

(xi) The European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

History: Established in 1960. Its founding members were Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Finland became a member in 1986. Five countries have left EFTA to join the European Union (EU): Denmark and the United Kingdom in 1972; Portugal in 1985; Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. Iceland joined EFTA in 1970; Liechtenstein in 1991 (although Liechtenstein had been associated with EFTA from the beginning through its customs union with Switzerland); and Slovenia in 1995.

Mandate: To remove import duties, quotas and other obstacles to trade in western Europe and to uphold liberal, non-discriminatory practices in world trade. However, EFTA is not a customs union and its members retain their freedom in trade policies towards non-member countries.

Members (5): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland

Structure: The EFTA Council is responsible for the operation of the free trade area among member States. The Council meets regularly at the level of ministers or ambassadors and is the forum in which the member governments consult and act together. EFTA has its Headquarters in Geneva and a large Brussels Office for European Economic Area (EEA)-related matters. The Council is assisted by a number of committees, including the Committees of Origin and Customs Experts and of Trade Experts, and the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. A Committee of Members of Parliament also serves as a consultative body. Groups of experts, usually drawn from the governments of member States, are set up from time to time to deal with specific problems.

Recent Developments: On 2 May 1992 the countries of EFTA and the EC signed an agreement establishing the European Economic Area (EEA). The objective of the Agreement is to create a single market in Western Europe. Citizens of all 17 countries involved (except Switzerland) have the right to move freely throughout Europe - to live, work, set up businesses, invest or buy real estate anywhere in the economic area. The EEA entered into force on 1 January 1994. Ratification of the final text by all the participating EFTA and EC States was completed during 1993. Switzerland chose not to participate in the EEA following a referendum on the subject in December 1992. Liechtenstein aims to join at a later date after it negotiates the terms of its customs union with Switzerland. The EEA does not include the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) although the EFTA countries have individually agreed to improve market access for some EU agricultural products, especially those originating in less developed parts of the European Union. The EEA is not a customs union either. This means that there is no common EFTA-EU trade policy or common tariffs towards countries outside the EEA.

Relations with Other Organizations: The EFTA has established privileged links with the European Union through the EEA agreement.

(xii) Other subregional organizations

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, US, Yugoslavia) Established on 20 January 1930 in Basel. Its aim is to promote cooperation among national central banks in international financial settlements. The Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) is a cooperative venture among the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). JVI is specialized in providing training related to the economic and financial management of transition processes.

The Euro-Arctic Council of the Barents Sea (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russian Federation) Established by foreign ministers of the Russian Federation and the Scandinavian States. Its goals are to strengthen cooperation at all levels, and to preserve the regional environment.

The Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) Established in 1991 in Visegrad (Hungary) in order to promote political cooperation in Central Europe and to accelerate the process of integration into the European Union. Political Cooperation among the five countries is maintained through their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. This instrument will consist of a group of experts whose task is to lead work on issues of common interest, such as the progress of trade, international assistance, interconnection of infrastructures, and the environment. This semi-official expert organization has been supported by the respective governments and the European Union. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) was signed on 21 December 1992 in Cracow.